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PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

OUR CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

Education Committee Visits District

This session I persuaded the legislature's Education Committee to hold a **public hearing in our district** to solicit input from our leaders and residents on the state's funding of local schools. A major focus of the hearing, held in Ledyard, was the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant, the state's primary program for funding local school systems and special education reimbursement.

The hearing was very well attended and many people testified about the importance of the state meeting its obligations to schools in small towns. **Never before has this critical committee convened in our district** to hear first-hand about the impact on our property taxes and schools when the state fails to meet its commitments to education.



Rep. Reynolds speaking to the chamber in the House of Representatives

At the Capitol:
Representative Tom Reynolds
Legislative Office Building, Room 4033
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
1-800-842-8267
E-mail: Tom.Reynolds@cga.ct.gov

Underage Drinking

A new "House Parties" law was passed to discourage underage drinking and reduce drunk driving. The law makes it a **crime for a homeowner to supply alcohol to a minor** or to knowingly permit a minor to possess alcohol on the property. It also makes it illegal for a minor to possess alcohol anywhere, rather than only in public places.

College Savings Tax Deductible

Taxpayers will now be able to deduct their contributions to the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET) from their Connecticut state income tax. **Single filers can deduct up to \$5,000, whereas joint filers can deduct \$10,000.** Any unused deductions can be carried forward for the following five years so long as each deduction does not exceed the annual maximums.



State Representative TOM REYNOLDS

Legislative Report - 2006

42nd District Ledyard, Preston, Montville

Dear Neighbor:

It has truly been an honor to represent you in the Connecticut General Assembly. My second year has been a busy and productive one, and I am pleased to report to you on the outcome of the 2006 session.

*This year the budget passed on time, under the spending cap, and with **no new taxes**. In fact, a budget surplus allowed the state to give money back to cities and towns.*

*The legislature also agreed to make permanent changes to the Mashantucket Pequot-Mohegan Fund, the state's share of slot machine revenue from the two casinos. These reforms ensure that **casino host towns and the region receive a larger share of the state's slot revenue** to help offset casino impact on our communities.*

*We worked hard to ensure Connecticut jobs are safe and competitive by **eliminating the 15% corporation tax surcharge** on businesses for 2007, establishing a **job creation tax credit** and a **displaced worker tax credit**, and **providing tax incentives** to the movie and film industry to spur growth and jobs.*

I am grateful for and humbled by the opportunity to serve you. I look forward to your continued input as I work to ensure that the interests of our small towns are heard at the State Capitol.

Respectfully,

Tom Reynolds

Report on State Aid: Big Increases for Ledyard, Preston, Montville

My top priority has been working to increase state aid to our small towns after a decade of largely flat or declining state support. I am pleased to report the following results of the 2006 session and the 2005-07 state budget:

- ✓ Largest increase in municipal aid in 17 years
- ✓ Co-authored new law directing a greater share of the state's slot fund to casino host towns and the region (see details inside)
- ✓ Largest increase in the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant in a decade
- ✓ 50% increase in special education funding
- ✓ 50% increase in local road funding
- ✓ \$33 million in Property Tax Relief Grants to towns
- ✓ Authored new law reimbursing towns for out-of-district special education placements made by Native American tribal governments

Tax Holiday on Energy Products

The "Sales Tax Holiday" on weatherization products has been extended **from June 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007**. These products can help make our homes more energy efficient and begin to reduce our cooling and heating costs.

2005-07 STATE BUDGET – MORE MONEY FOR OUR TOWNS

	Education Aid	Non-Education Aid	Total State Aid
Ledyard	\$376,063 increase (4%)	\$556,328 increase (63%)	\$932,391 increase (8%)
Preston	\$100,670 increase (4%)	\$476,792 increase (38%)	\$577,462 increase (15%)
Montville	\$360,317 increase (3%)	\$1,273,070 increase (48%)	\$1,633,387 increase (12%)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STATE GRANTS & BONDING

MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT-MOHEGAN FUND

Preston

Working with town officials, we persuaded the state to approve a transfer and sales agreement for the Norwich Hospital Property, which gave Preston a three-year option to purchase the land for \$1 if it assumes responsibility for the environmental clean-up. The agreement empowered the town to embark on a developer selection process. This state surplus property has remained vacant far too long, and the agreement was a critical step to ensuring the eventual development of the property.

Ledyard

The legislature adopted my legislation to transfer 43 acres of state land in Ledyard to the town for “municipal and economic development” purposes. This transfer and the limited deed restriction gives the town great flexibility and many options for the preservation or future development of this land for the benefit of the town.

A top priority has been making sure our small towns get their fair share of state grants and bonding. I am pleased to report the following results:

- \$1 million legislative bonding earmarked for the construction of a water main extension along Route 117 in Ledyard
- \$650,000 Small Cities Grant to upgrade the Ledyard Village water system
- \$800,000 Small Cities Grant for improvements to the Lincoln Park Senior housing complex in Preston
- \$800,000 legislative bonding earmarked for the construction of a water main extension along Route 32 in Uncasville
- \$137,000 legislative bonding earmarked to connect the Mohegan School to the public water supply in Uncasville

Ledyard, Preston, Montville to Receive Larger Share of Casino Slot Fund!

The casinos have created thousands of jobs and sparked economic activity around the state, but these enterprises also have a major impact on our towns. Southeastern Connecticut has struggled to meet its obligations as host communities for the casinos. The region has fought for many years to increase its share of the state’s slot machine revenues. This revenue is necessary to address growing needs in fire, police, ambulance, roads, schools, housing and other services.



Rep. Reynolds (at podium) joins House Speaker James Amann (left) to announce legislation to reform the Pequot-Mohegan Fund

Bringing more casino revenue back to our towns has been my top priority. Following a bi-partisan effort by the region’s legislative delegation, municipal leaders, and the tribes, the legislature reformed the Mashantucket Pequot-Mohegan Fund to ensure greater fairness and equity for towns most impacted by the casinos. I am pleased to have helped initiate this process, directing legislative dollars and attention to our unique needs.

Pequot-Mohegan Fund Grant

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2-Year Increase
Ledyard	\$612,353	\$861,415	\$983,275	61%
Preston	\$922,829	\$1,154,191	\$1,296,315	41%
Montville	\$1,174,860	\$1,728,667	\$2,139,206	82%
Totals:	\$2,710,042	\$3,744,273	\$4,418,796	63%

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

OUR MILITARY FAMILIES

Veterans

A new law will exclude veterans’ disability payments when determining their eligibility for property tax exemptions for veterans, the blind, and people with total disabilities. Exemptions are granted through two statutes; one requires towns to give a **basic \$1,000 property tax exemption**, and the other requires towns to give veterans who get the basic exemption an additional exemption according to their income.



Rep. Reynolds at the State Capitol with CT Veterans Hall of Fame inductee Ernest Plantz of Gales Ferry

Wartime Service Medal

Last year Connecticut created a wartime service medal for all veterans who were residents of the state when called to active duty or are residents at the time of the award. In order to receive the Wartime Service Medal, an application must be filed with the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs. Please contact my office for more information.

Seniors

A new law allows towns to **freeze property taxes on homes owned by people age 70 or older** who have lived in the state for at least one year and who meet income eligibility requirements.

Property Tax Credit

The legislature increased the property tax credit on the state income tax from **\$400 to \$500** beginning in the 2006 tax year.

Region’s Share of the Pequot-Mohegan Fund to Increase

- In 2007, for the first time, eastern Connecticut will receive a percentage-based share of the growth in the state’s casino revenue. The **additional \$1.6 million** in new revenue for the region will be added to our existing Pequot-Mohegan Fund Grants and will continue indefinitely.
- Beginning this year Ledyard, Preston, Montville, Norwich and North Stonington will receive impact aid grants **of \$750,000 each**—a 50% increase—in addition to their regular distribution from the slot fund and on top of their share of the new \$1.6 million allotment for the region.
- Unlike past years, impact aid grants to host communities **must now be fully funded annually** and come “off the top” before other towns get their share.

21st Century Transportation Plan!

Connecticut is in the midst of a transportation crisis that is threatening our quality-of-life and the economic well being of the state. I am pleased to report that the legislature adopted a **10-year, \$2.3 billion transportation plan** to fund expansion of mass transit and improvements to our major highways. This major transportation initiative includes a number of eastern Connecticut priorities, including improvements to I-95, I-395, Routes 2/2A/32, the Mohegan-Pequot Bridge, and the Shore Line East rail line.

